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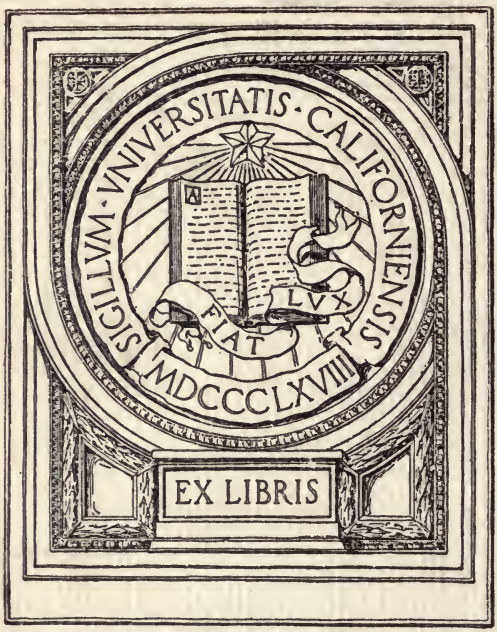

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The Columbus Letters.

Colombo, Cristoforo.

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SOUVENIR
OF THE
MONASTERY OF LA RABID
WORLD'S FAIR GROUNDS
CHICAGO

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[*Letter of Columbus to Nicolo Oderigo, March 21, 1502.*]

SIR:

The solitude in which you have left us cannot be described. I gave Micer Francis de Ribarol the book containing my deeds (or grants, or concessions), and, also, copies of the letters and messages sent to me; and, I pray you, as a great favor to me, to write to Don Diego and inform him of the place in which you keep those documents, and the use you make of them. A duplicate of all of them will be made, and sent to you in the same way and through the same channel of Francisco. You will find there a new concession. Their Highnesses promise therein, as you will see, to give me all that belongs to me, and put Don Diego in possession thereof. I have written to Micer Juan Luys, and to Madam Madona Catalina the letter I enclose. I shall start out, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, with a good equipment, at the first moment of good weather. If Jerome de Santi Esteban comes, he must wait for me, and not to commit himself to anything; because they will try to get out of him all that they can, and afterwards they will leave him in the cold. Let him come here, and the King and Queen will entertain him until I come.

May our Lord keep you in His holy guard.

Done on the 21st of March, at SEVILLE, 1502.

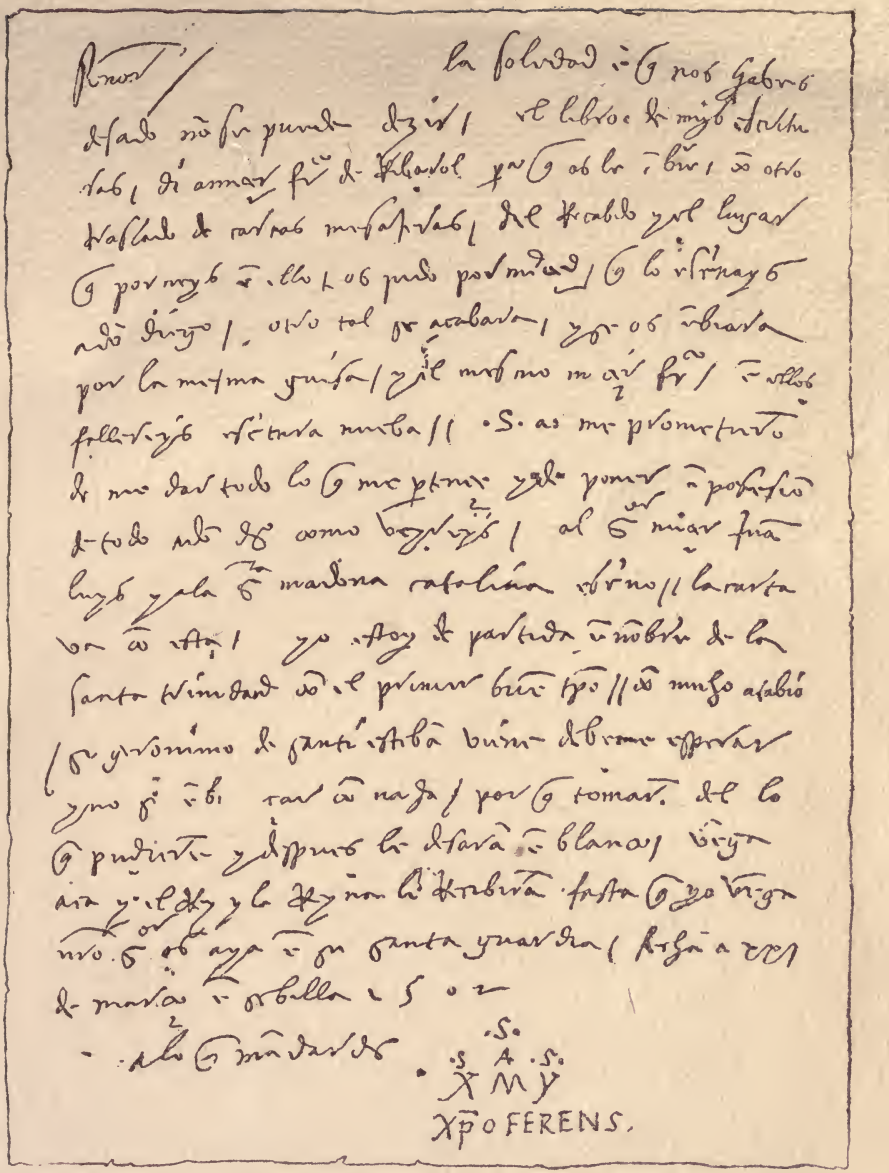
I am, for what you may order,

Your servant,

X. M. Y.

XPO FERENS.

Bancroft Library



[ORIGINAL IN THE CITY HALL, GENOA.]

With this letter Columbus encloses to Oderigo [who, as the ambassador from his native place to Spain, had been his friend and protector] copies of all his letters, patents, grants, titles, privileges, etc., received from the Sovereigns of Spain, authenticated by the Alcalde of Seville. Because of his declining years and increasing doubts of the justice of the King, he places these documents in the hands of a trustee for the benefit of his family, and asks Oderigo to apprise his son, Diego Columbus, of the fact.

These documents lay unknown in the Oderigo family until 1870, when they were discovered and placed in the Archives of Genoa. They are now in the Custodia or monument there, and have been published, together with a memoir of Columbus, by D. Gio Battista Spotorno, Professor of Eloquence in the University of Genoa.

LETTER OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

TO

THE CATHOLIC KINGS

ON THE

RECOVERY OF THE HOLY CITY OF JERUSALEM.

(The original is in the BOOK OF PROPHECIES in the Colombina Library at Seville.)

MOST CHRISTIAN AND HIGH PRINCES:

The reason why I desire the restitution of the Holy House to the militant church is the following:

MOST HIGH KINGS: Bancroft Library

At a very early age I began to navigate the seas, and have ever since continued to do so. The art of navigation itself renders its adepts inclined to investigate the secrets of this world. More than forty years have passed since I have been in this habit. Every place which has been thus far navigated by others has been also navigated by me. I have dealt and talked with learned people, both Laymen and Ecclesiastical, Greek and Latin, Jews and Moors, and Sectarians of many other creeds. To this aspiration of mine I always found the Lord very propitious. He gave me an intelligent spirit; He made me abundantly qualified for the office of a sailor; He caused me to know all that sufficed for my purpose of Astrology, Geometry and Arithmetic; and I received from Him the gift of having ability in my mind and my hands to draw a sphere and mark on it—everything in its proper place—the cities, rivers, mountains, islands and ports.

During the time referred to I have been careful to study what has been written on Cosmography, History, Chronicles, Philosophy and other arts; and it was in this way that our Lord, whose hand in this affair I palpably see, put in my mind the idea that it was practicable to navigate from here to the Indies, and kindled in my heart the desire to accomplish it. Urged by this fire, I came before Your Highnesses.

(OVER)

Carta del almyrante al Rey: y a la reyna

Ypuanissimos e muy altos principes

4.

e la rason q̃ tengo dela restitucion dela casa santa a la santa ygl̃ia militante es la sygniente.

e muy altos reyes. de muy pequeña edad entre en la mar navegando. a lo he continuado fasta oy. la mesma arte vnclina a quien le prosigue. a desear de saber los segetos deste mundo. y a pasan de yl años q̃ yo voy en este vso. todo lo q̃ fasta oy se navega. todo lo he andado tanto y conversacion he tenido con gente sabia. he clesiasticos a seglares. latinos y griegos judios y moros y con otros muchos de otras seras. a este mi deseo falle a nro señor muy trasporo. yo ve del paresello esp̃to de ynteligencia. en la marineria me fiso abondoso de astrologia. me dio lo q̃ abastaba. y asy de geometria y arismetica. e yengenio con el animo y manos para debusar esperia. y en ella las abdades tyros y montañas. y las y puertos todo en su propio sytio.

e en este tpo he yo visto y puesto estudio en ver de todas escrituras. cosmo grasia. y storias coronicas y filosofia y de otras artes. a q̃ me abrio nro señor el entendimiento. con mano palpable. a q̃ era hasedero navegar de aqui a las yndias. y me abrio la boluntad para la hexecucion dello. y con este fuego vine a v. a. todos aquellos q̃ supieron de mi ynpresa contrixa le negaron burlando. todas las ciencias de q̃ dise a tiba non me aprovecharon. mas a autoridades dellas. en solo v. a. quedo la fee y costancia quien dubda q̃ esta lumbre no fuese del esp̃to santo. asy como de mi el qual con trayos de claridad maravillosos consolo. con su sanar y sacra escritura. a vos muy alta y clara. con quarenta y quatro libros del viejo testamento. y quatro hevangelios. con veynte e tres hepistolas. de aquellos bien aventurados apostoles. abibandome q̃ yo prosyguiese. y de continuo sincesar un momento. me abiban con gran presa

e milagro. e bidentisimo q̃ so faser nro señor en esto del viaje de las yndias por me consolar a mi ya a otros en este otro dela casa santa. siete años pase aqui en su real corte despachando el caso con mas pre

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First part of an autograph letter of Columbus to the Catholic Kings (p. 4).

Every one who heard of my undertaking laughed at me and denied its soundness. Neither the knowledge I possessed of the sciences aforenamed nor their own intrinsic authority was of any avail to me. Only in Your Highnesses I found faith and perseverance. Who doubts that this light came to Your Highnesses, as it had come to me, from that very Holy Spirit who so loudly and clearly has given consolation to the world, by means of the wonderful rays of light emanating from the Holy and Sacred Scripture, in 44 books of the Old Testament, and the 4 Gospels and 23 Epistles of the Blessed Apostles. Was not that Spirit the one who urged me to go on constantly, without stopping a moment, and is still urging me, and hastening my steps?

Your Highnesses must remember how little money Your Highnesses could dispose of when the Siege of Granada was undertaken. The determination to undertake all things was left by our Lord to the free will of every one of us. He gives admonition to many; but he denies to none the human power which he may need to engage in the undertaking. Oh! the goodness of the Lord, who wishes the people to do those things which will prove to be to their own advantage! Day and night, and at all moments, men should be thanking Him with the greatest devotion.

I said before that many things contained in the prophecies have not been fulfilled as yet. And I say now that they are great things, and that according to all signs our Lord is hastening its fulfillment. The preaching of the Gospel in so many lands, in such a short time as we have lately seen, proves that to me.

Cardinal Petrus de Ayliaco writes much about the end of the Mahometan sect, and the advent of the Anti-Christ, in a book which he wrote with the title (in latin) "On the Harmony of Astronomic Truth with the Historical Statements." He refutes in that book the opinions of many astronomers on the ten revolutions of Saturn. This he does especially at the end of said book, in the last nine chapters of the same.

Abbé Joachim, of Calabria, said that the one who was to rebuild the house of Mount Sion would come from Spain.

Last part of an autograph letter of Columbus to the Catholic Kings (p. 6).

[*Letter of Columbus to the Bank of St. George, April 2, 1502.*]

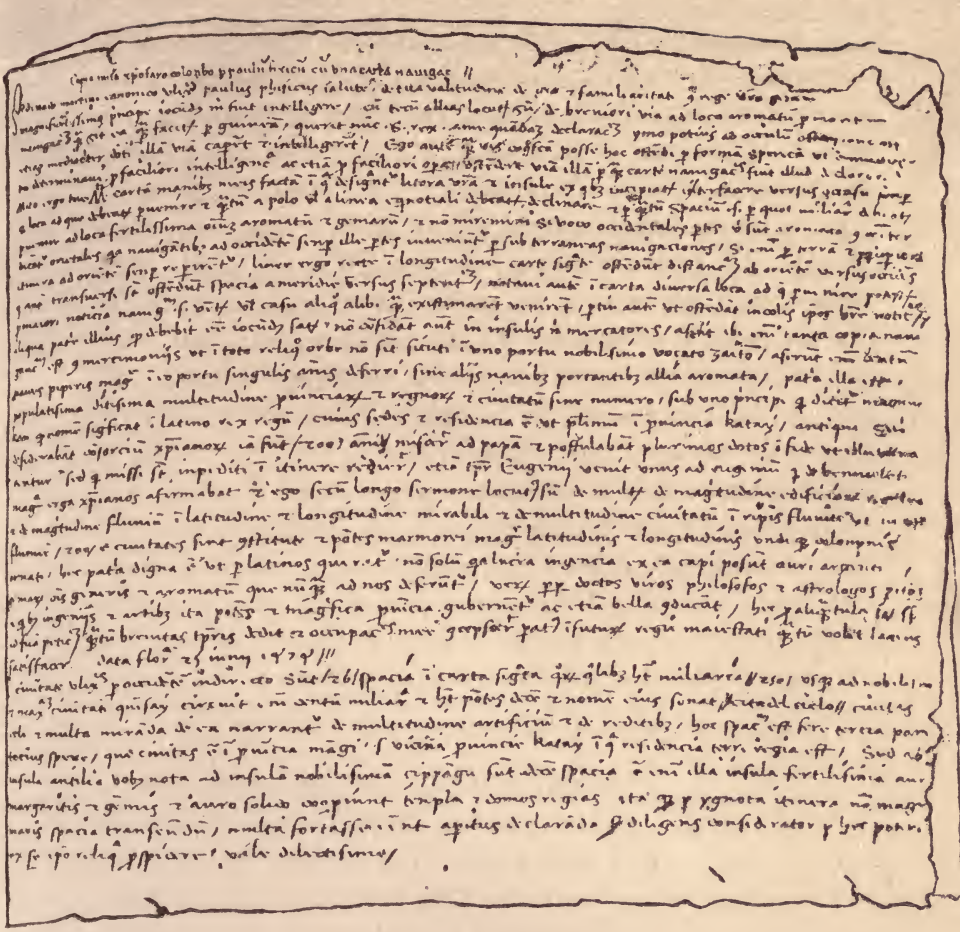
HIGH, NOBLE LORDS:

Although the body walks about here, the heart is constantly over there. Our Lord has conferred upon me the greatest favor ever granted to any since David. The results of my undertaking already appear, and would shine greatly, were they not concealed by the blindness of the Government. I am going to the Indies again under the auspices of the Trinity, soon to return; and, since I am mortal, I leave it with my son Diego that you receive every year, forever, one-tenth of the entire revenue, such as it may be, for the purpose of reducing the tax upon corn, wine and other provisions. If that tenth amounts to something, collect it. If not, at least take the will for the deed. I beg you to entertain regard for the son I have recommended to you. Mr. Nicolo de Oderigo knows more about my own affairs than I do myself, and I have sent by him the transcripts of my privileges and letters for safe keeping. I should be glad if you would keep them. My Lords, the King and Queen endeavor to honor more than ever. May the Holy Trinity preserve your noble persons and increase the most magnificent House (of St. George).

Done in SEVILLE, on the second day of April, 1502.

The Chief Admiral of the Ocean, Viceroy and Governor General of the islands and continents of Asia, and the Indies, of my Lords the King and Queen, their Captain General of the Sea and of their Councils.

S.
S. A. S.
X. M. Y.
XPO FERENS.



Copy of the letter of Toscanelli to the Portuguese priest Ferdinand Martines, made by Columbus on a fly leaf of the book "Historia rerum ubique gestarum," etc.

[*Letter of Columbus to Nicolo Oderigo, from Seville, December 27, 1504. Original in the City Hall at Genoa.*]

VIRTUOUS SIR:

When I started on my voyage to the places from where I have just come, I spoke at length with you. I understand that you remember well all that then was said.

When returning here, I was in hopes to find some letters from you, or some messenger who would tell me verbally something in your name.

At about the same time of my departure from here, I sent to you by Francisco de Ribarol a book containing copies of several letters, and another in which all the grants and privileges given me were also copied, the whole enclosed in a red-morocco case, with a silver lock. I also sent, with the same man, two letters for the St. George gentlemen, in which I assigned to them the tenth of my revenue in consideration of and compensation for the reduction made on the duties on wheat and the other supplies. To nothing of this I have had any reply. Micer Francisco says that everything arrived safely. If this is the case, the failure of the St. George gentlemen to answer to my letters is an act of discourtesy, for which the treasury is by no means better off. This is the reason why it is generally said that to serve common people is serving no one.*

Another book of my privileges, equal to the one above mentioned, was left by me at Cadiz, with Franco Catanio (who is the bearer of this letter), with instructions to send it to you, in order that you would keep it, together with the other, in some safe place, at your discretion.

At the time of my departure I received a letter from the King and Queen, my Lord and Lady. It is written there. Look at it, and you will find it very good. Nevertheless, Don Diego was not given possession, as it was promised.

While I was in the Indies, I wrote to Their Highnesses, through three or four channels, about my voyage. One of these letters came back to me, and sealed as it was. I enclose it in this and send it to you. In another letter I enclose also a supplement to the above description of my voyage, and I pray you to give both to Micer Juan Luis, to whom I also have written and said that you will be the reader and interpreter of the said letters.

---

* "*Quien sirve a comun, no sirve a ningun.*"

I am anxious to hear from you, especially about the plan which we agreed to.

I arrived here very sick, and at about the time in which the Queen, my Lady (whom God has with Him), died, and I could not see her.

Up to the present, it is impossible for me to tell you what will be the practical result of all my doings. I suppose that Her Highness has properly provided in her will for everything concerning this matter, and the King, my Lord, always gives good answers.

Franco Catanio will verbally explain to you, at length, all the rest.

May our Lord keep you in His guard.

From SEVILLE, December 27th, 1504.

S.
S. A. S.
X. M. Y.
XPO FERENS,
Great Admiral of the Ocean,
Viceroy and Governor-General of the Indies.